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## Chapter 4

### ESSENTIAL ELEMENTS OF A CONSERVATION PLAN

The format and content of conservation planning documents can be organized in a variety of ways to meet a range of needs. There are two inter-related needs that the LCSCI will strive to mesh. First, the LCSCI is intended to provide NMFS with a conceptual framework for steelhead restoration that is detailed enough to allow NMFS to effectively interpret how implementation of the LCSCI will affect steelhead in the Washington portion of the Lower Columbia ESU. Second, regardless of the ESA or outcome of NMFS's listing determination, the LCSCI addresses implementation needs consistent with the evolving state restoration strategy, and its influence the NMFS recovery plan for lower Columbia River steelhead.

In late 1996, NMFS produced a document designed to assist Pacific coast states, tribes, and other entities in taking the initiative for coastal salmon restoration. To a large extent the document stemmed from a need by NMFS to provide guidance to entities involved in conservation planning for coho salmon on the Oregon coast. The NMFS document is entitled "*Coastal Salmon Conservation: Working Guidance for Comprehensive Salmon Restoration Initiatives on the Pacific Coast*" (NMFS 1996c). Three overarching components of a successful restoration strategy are outlined in that document:

- “(a) **substantive protective and conservation elements,**
- (b) a high level of certainly that the strategy will be reliably implemented, including necessary authorities, commitments, funding, staffing, and enforcement measures,**
- (c) a comprehensive monitoring program.”**

The concepts and elements outlined in that document will be used by NMFS to assess the suitability and merits of proposed conservation plans regarding listing decisions according to ESA requirements. **Thus the approach and format have been influenced to a substantial extent by this guidance from NMFS.**

There are nine elements that NMFS identified as being critical to conservation plans. These nine elements are listed below:

#### Substance Of The Plan

1. Identify at appropriate scales the factors that have contributed to decline of the ESU(s).
2. Establish priorities for action.
3. Establish explicit objectives and timelines for eliminating or reducing all major factors for decline and for achieving desired population characteristics.

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4. Establish quantifiable criteria and standards by which progress towards each objective will be measured.
  5. Adopt measures (actions) needed to achieve the explicit objectives. A plan should include measures to protect and restore habitat wherever habitat condition is a factor of decline, whether on private or public lands.

### **Implementation Certainty**

6. Provide high levels of certainty that the identified measures and actions will be implemented, including necessary authorities, commitments, funding, staffing, and enforcement measures.

### **Monitoring**

7. Establish a comprehensive monitoring and reporting program, including methods to measure whether objectives are being met, and to detect subpopulation declines and increases in each ESU.

### **Other**

8. As much as possible, integrate federal, state, tribal, local, corporate, and non-governmental activities and projects that are designed to recover salmon populations and the habitat upon which they depend.
9. Utilize an adaptive management approach that actively shapes management actions to generate needed information.